

Claims:

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1. A method for processing mailpieces with which graphic information located on the surface of a mailpiece is detected and information is ascertained on the basis of which the mailpieces can each be associated with a mailing type, with which the recipient's address, a piece of information that identifies the mailpiece and/or a mailer of the mailpiece is ascertained and with which it is determined how many mailpieces a mailer has delivered,

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characterized in that

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the pieces of information are combined with each other in such a way that a delivery structure is ascertained and in that the ascertained number and the ascertained delivery structure are compared to a delivery job batch that contains the number of delivered mailpieces and a delivery structure and that was transmitted by a customer and/or a delivery job batch is created that contains the number and the delivery structure, and in that the delivery job batch is compared to a customer data record that contains a prepaid postage value and/or a limit for a postage value.

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2. The method according to Claim 1,

characterized in that

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at least one additional piece of payment-relevant information about every single mailpiece is detected.

3. The method according to one or both of Claims 1 and 2,

characterized in that

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the checking of the delivery structure comprises checking whether the mailpieces were pre-sorted by the mailer.

4. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is checked whether the pre-sorting was carried out on the basis of
addresses of recipients.
5. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is checked whether the pre-sorting was carried out on the basis of postal
codes of the individual recipients of the mailpieces.
6. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is checked whether the mailpieces were pre-sorted according to mailing
properties.
7. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is checked whether the pre-sorting was carried out according to one or
more size specifications.
8. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is checked whether the pre-sorting was carried out according to the weight
of the mailpieces.
9. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is ascertained for each of the mailpieces whether they have an identifica-
tion number and in that the identification number of the mailpieces is used
for the invoicing.

10. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is ascertained for each of the mailpieces whether they have a customer
number and in that the customer number of a mailer is used for the invoicing.

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11. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that,
on the basis of the number of mailpieces of the mailer and/or of the ascer-
tained delivery structure, an invoicing database is ascertained.

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12. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
the delivery job batch is transmitted to a customer data management system,
and in that the customer data management system determines whether there
are discrepancies between the invoicing data record and the delivery job
batch, and in that, if there are discrepancies between the invoicing data
record and the delivery job batch, the customer data management system
records these in a differential protocol.

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- 20 13. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
it is checked whether a customer has transmitted a delivery job batch, and in
that, if the customer has not generated a delivery job batch, a delivery job
batch is generated automatically.

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14. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that,
on the basis of the detected information, a delivery confirmation is issued to
the mailer.

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15. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,

characterized in that

the delivery confirmation contains one or more components of the ascertained delivery structure.

- 5 16. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
the mailpieces are associated with a mailing type on the basis of the graphic information and, in order to check the authenticity of the franking information, are transmitted to a reading device, and in that, as a function of the
10 appertaining mailing type, the graphic information of the individual mailpieces is transmitted to a specialized reading device for checking the authenticity of the particular type of franking.
- 15 17. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
the graphic information is associated with a type of franking by means of the image processing unit.
- 20 18. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
the specialized reading device is selected as a function of the current capacities of the available reading devices.
- 25 19. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that,
after being detected by the mail processing station, the graphic information located on the surface of the mailpieces is checked to see whether the detected graphic information diverges from expected graphic information, and in that the ascertained graphic information, if it diverges from the
30 expected graphic information, is transmitted to the central image processing unit where another comparison is carried out.

20. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that,

5 a checking of the payment expected for the mailpiece is carried out by
comparing the graphic information located on the surfaces of the mailpieces
to the expected graphic information.

21. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that

10 the checking as to whether a mailpiece has an expected payment takes place
in two stages, whereby first of all, a means in the area of the mail processing
station compares the graphic information located on the mailpieces to the
expected graphic information, and in that the graphic information of the
mailpieces for which discrepancies between the actual graphic information
15 and the expected graphic information were ascertained in the area of the
processing machines undergoes another comparison between the ascertained
graphic information and the expected graphic information in a specialized
reading device.

- 20 22. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that

a mail processing station transmits the detected graphic information of a
mailpiece, together with accompanying information, to an image processing
machine.

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23. The method according to Claim 22,
characterized in that

the accompanying information contains results that were ascertained in one
or more checking steps carried out on the mailpiece by the means of a mail
30 processing station.

24. The method according to one or more of the preceding claims,
characterized in that
the mailpieces are sorted as a function of the detected graphic information.